

Equatorial Guinea

Incidence and Nature of Child Labor

Statistics on the number of working children under age 15 in Equatorial Guinea are unavailable.¹⁷¹⁰ Children work on family farms and in domestic service, street vending,¹⁷¹¹ and bars and grocery stores.¹⁷¹² There are reports that children also work in prostitution, particularly in Bata and the capital city, Malabo.¹⁷¹³ Children are trafficked to Equatorial Guinea from other countries in West and Central Africa, particularly Cameroon, Nigeria, and Benin. Girls are trafficked for commercial sexual exploitation and domestic service, while boys are forced to work as farmhands and street hawkers. Boys trafficked from Nigeria reportedly work in market stalls in Bata often without pay or personal freedom.¹⁷¹⁴

The Constitution of Equatorial Guinea establishes free and compulsory education through primary school,¹⁷¹⁵ but the law is not enforced, and many rural families cannot afford school fees and book expenses.¹⁷¹⁶ In 2001, the gross primary enrollment rate was 126.2 percent, and the net primary enrollment rate was 84.6 percent. There was a significant disparity between the net primary enrollment rates of boys and girls, with 91.4 percent of boys enrolled versus 77.9 percent of girls.¹⁷¹⁷ Gross and net enrollment ratios are based on the number of students formally registered in primary school and therefore do not

¹⁷¹⁰ This statistic is not available from the data sources that are used in this report. Please see the "Data Sources and Definitions" section for information about sources used. Reliable data on the worst forms of child labor are especially difficult to collect given the often hidden or illegal nature of the worst forms, such as the use of children in the illegal drug trade, prostitution, pornography, and trafficking. As a result, statistics and information on children's work in general are reported in this section. Such statistics and information may or may not include the worst forms of child labor. For more information on the definition of working children and other indicators used in this report, please see the "Data Sources and Definitions" section of this report.

¹⁷¹¹ U.S. Department of State, *Country Reports on Human Rights Practices- 2004: Equatorial Guinea*, Washington, D.C., February 25, 2004, 5; available from <http://www.state.gov/g/drl/rls/hrrpt/2003/27725.htm>. See also UN Committee on the Rights of the Child, *Concluding Observations of the Committee on the Rights of the Child: Equatorial Guinea, CRC/C/15/Add.245*, United Nations, Geneva, November 3, 2004, Paragraph 54.

¹⁷¹² Integrated Regional Information Networks, *Equatorial Guinea; Minors Grounded, Prohibited from Working*, Africa News Service, Inc., [online] August 31, 2001 [cited September 29, 2005]; available from www.irinnews.org/print.asp?ReportID=11006.

¹⁷¹³ Opinions vary on the extent of this problem. See U.S. Department of State, *Country Reports- 2004: Equatorial Guinea*, Section 5. See also U.S. Department of State, *Trafficking in Persons Report- 2004: Equatorial Guinea*, Washington, D.C., June 10, 2004; available from <http://www.state.gov/g/tip/rls/tiprpt/2003/21275.htm>. See also Ministry of Labor and Social Security and UNICEF, *Report on Trafficking of Children and Child Labor in Equatorial Guinea*, November 2001. See also AFROL, *Child Labour Increasing in Equatorial Guinea*, [online] November 21, 2000 [cited September 29, 2005]; available from http://www.afrol.com/News/eqg023_child_labour.htm. See also AFROL, *Prostitution Booms in Equatorial Guinea as Education Sector Folds Up*, [online] October 12, 2000 [cited September 29, 2005]; available from http://www.afrol.com/News/eqg013_prostitution.htm.

¹⁷¹⁴ U.S. Department of State, *Country Reports- 2004: Equatorial Guinea*, Section 5. A 2001 child trafficking study by the Equatorial Guinean Ministry of Labor and Social Security in collaboration with UNICEF, that questioned 596 children in urban and rural areas of the country, found up to 150 boys and girls whom had been trafficked from Benin and Nigeria. Ministry of Labor and Social Security and UNICEF, *Child Labor and Trafficking Report*.

¹⁷¹⁵ *Constitution of the Republic of Equatorial Guinea*, (January 17, 1995); available from http://www.ceiba-guinea-ecuatorial.org/guineeangl/nvelle_const.htm (cited on September 29, 2005). According to the U.S. Department of State, education is mandatory through age twelve. U.S. Embassy- Yaounde, *reporting*, August, 2005.

¹⁷¹⁶ U.S. Department of State, *Country Reports- 2004: Equatorial Guinea*, Section 5.

¹⁷¹⁷ World Bank, *World Development Indicators 2004* [CD-ROM], Washington, D.C., 2004. For an explanation of gross primary enrollment and/or attendance rates that are greater than 100 percent, please see the definitions of gross primary enrollment rate and gross primary attendance rate in the glossary of this report. There is a similar disparity in attendance rates between boys and girls. UN Committee on the Rights of the Child, *Concluding Observations of the Committee on the Rights of the Child*, Paragraph 54.

necessarily reflect actual school attendance. Recent primary school attendance statistics are not available for Equatorial Guinea.¹⁷¹⁸

Late entry into the school system and high dropout rates are common, and girls are more likely than boys to drop out of school.¹⁷¹⁹ Cultural perceptions, pregnancy, and the expectation that girls will assist with agricultural work result in lower education attainment levels for girls. While some new schools have opened, many lack books and desks. Some teachers serve as political appointees and lack sufficient training.¹⁷²⁰ In the 2005 national budget, the government has allocated additional financial resources to education; however, it is not clear how these funds were used.¹⁷²¹

Child Labor Laws and Enforcement

The minimum age for employment is 14 years.¹⁷²² Children as young as 13 years old may legally perform light work that does not interfere with their health, growth, or school attendance. Children who are at least 12 years old may work in agriculture or handicrafts, with authorization from the Ministry of Labor. Children under 16 years are prohibited from work that might harm their health, safety, or morals.¹⁷²³ The U.S. Department of State and the Committee on the Rights of the Child report that the Ministry of Labor does not effectively enforce the minimum age for work or other labor laws and mechanisms to control child labor.¹⁷²⁴

In July, 2005 the government passed a decree banning all children under the age of 16 years from being on the streets after 11 p.m. The decree forbids parents or tutors from exploiting children in labor such as street vending, car washing, or working in bars or restaurants. Under the decree, youth found in the above situations will be automatically arrested, and businesses that employ minors, including family businesses, will be sanctioned. The law stipulates that repeat offenders will face closure of their businesses.¹⁷²⁵

Forced or bonded labor by children is forbidden, as is prostitution.¹⁷²⁶ In 2004, the Government adopted a new law against smuggling of migrants and trafficking in persons which includes prison terms of 5 to 10 years for those convicted of trafficking.¹⁷²⁷

¹⁷¹⁸ According to the representative of UNICEF in Equatorial Guinea in 2000, 50 percent of school-age children did not attend primary school. See AFROL, *Child Labour Increasing*.

¹⁷¹⁹ UN Economic and Social Council Commission on Human Rights, *Question of the Violation of Human Rights and Fundamental Freedoms in Any Part of the World: Report on the Human Rights Situation in the Republic of Equatorial Guinea submitted by the Special Representative of the Commission, Mr. Gustavo Gallón*, pursuant to Commission resolution 2000/19, E/CN.4/2001/38, United Nations, Geneva, January 16, 2001; available from [http://www.unhcr.ch/Huridocda/Huridoca.nsf/0/0c79798828d22553c1256a15005b5ddf/\\$FILE/G0110211.pdf](http://www.unhcr.ch/Huridocda/Huridoca.nsf/0/0c79798828d22553c1256a15005b5ddf/$FILE/G0110211.pdf).

¹⁷²⁰ UN Committee on the Rights of the Child, *Concluding Observations of the Committee on the Rights of the Child*, Paragraph 54.

¹⁷²¹ U.S. Department of State, *Country Reports- 2004: Equatorial Guinea*, Section 5.

¹⁷²² *Ibid.*, Section 6d.

¹⁷²³ UN Committee on the Rights of the Child, *Consideration of Reports Submitted by States Parties Under Article 44 of the Convention*, Initial reports of States parties due in 1994, CRC/C/11/Add.26, United Nations, Geneva, September 12, 2003, Paragraph 229. Coalition to Stop the Use of Child Soldiers, *Child Soldiers Global Report 2004*, London, March 2005; available from http://www.child-soldiers.org/document_get.php?id=770.

¹⁷²⁴ U.S. Department of State, *Country Reports- 2004: Equatorial Guinea*, 6d. See also UN Committee on the Rights of the Child, *Concluding Observations of the Committee on the Rights of the Child*, Paragraph 56.

¹⁷²⁵ U.S. Embassy- Yaounde, *reporting*, August, 2005.

¹⁷²⁶ U.S. Department of State, *Country Reports on Human Rights Practices- 2004: Equatorial Guinea*, Washington, DC, February 28, 2005; available from <http://www.state.gov/g/drl/rls/hrrpt/2003/27725.htm>.

Current Government Policies and Programs to Eliminate the Worst Forms of Child Labor

The Government of Equatorial Guinea has developed a draft national plan of action on trafficking, which includes plans to empower dedicated police officers to fight child trafficking. The plan had not been adopted as of the end of 2005. The government has also conducted a radio campaign to raise awareness about the new trafficking law.¹⁷²⁸

On March 2, 2004, the government and UNDP launched a plan to train sufficient teachers to provide primary education for every child in the country. Under this plan, the UNDP and Government of Equatorial Guinea have committed to spend USD 5.2 million to train 2,000 teachers, 45 school inspectors, and 35 educational advisors over the next 4 years.¹⁷²⁹

| Selected Child Labor Measures Adopted by Governments | | |
|--|-----------|---|
| Ratified Convention 138 | 6/12/1985 | ✓ |
| Ratified Convention 182 | 8/13/2001 | ✓ |
| ILO-IPEC Member | | |
| National Plan for Children | | |
| National Child Labor Action Plan | | |
| Sector Action Plan | | |

¹⁷²⁷ U.S. Department of State, *Trafficking in Persons Report: Equatorial Guinea*. See also U.S. Embassy- Yaounde, *reporting*, August, 2005.

¹⁷²⁸ U.S. Department of State, *Country Reports- 2004: Equatorial Guinea*, Section 5. U.S. Department of State, *Trafficking in Persons Report: Equatorial Guinea*. See also U.S. Embassy- Yaounde official, email communication, May 26, 2006.

¹⁷²⁹ United Nations Development Program, *\$5.2 million investment in Equatorial Guinea aims at early achievement of Millennium education goals*, March 1, 2004; available from <http://www.undp.org/dpa/frontpagearchive/2004/march/1mar04/>.